



Donating hours to the Meals on Wheels Program

giving back to Redmond

In about eight weeks, the general election will be upon us. It will bring to a close a lively campaigning season and without a doubt, change the composition of Redmond's City government. Many people have volunteered long hours towards getting their candidate elected. As for the candidates themselves, winning an election means many hours of community service in their futures!*

This may be the ultimate form of "giving back" to the community; however, there are many other ways to make a significant impact.

Simply stated, volunteering consists of doing something of one's own free will without expectation of monetary compensation. Without volunteers many nonprofits and the City government itself, would not be as successful, or even exist in some cases.

Many of the City's departments use volunteers to perform important tasks that employees do not have time to do. In 2006, volunteers gave over 23,000 hours to various City departments – the equivalent of 11 full time staff people! Based on the current recognized rate for volunteer labor of \$18 per hour, that equals almost \$425,000 worth of labor donated to the City.

*Councilmembers receive only a small monthly stipend for their efforts. The Mayor's position receives a fixed, full-time salary regardless of how many additional hours are worked.

The Redmond Senior Center has a volunteer crew ranging in age from 20 to 93. According to Ray Anspach, himself a volunteer, "We have an incredible group of volunteers helping us with every facet of the Center. Last year, 140 people volunteered over 12,000 hours in a variety of ways. These included greeting visitors, helping at the front desk, preparing and serving meals, delivering Meals on Wheels, leading a variety of interest groups and serving on various committees."

The Police Department has over 40 dedicated volunteers who staff the Police and Fire Substation in Redmond Town

Center, enforce disabled and fire lane parking laws and assist in crime prevention, administration and emergency communications, to name a few. "The Redmond Police volunteer program gives our citizens an opportunity to contribute to a cause that is greater than themselves while also allowing law enforcement officers and civilian staff to work where they are most needed," says Nan Dyer, Police Volunteer Program Coordinator.

Studies over the years have shown that there are many health benefits associated with volunteering. It increases self esteem, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress on the body and even bolsters the immune system. It also builds community.

No where more is this true than the hundreds of volunteers who help each year with preserving and enhancing Redmond's environment. From all those who come out to plant 500 trees on Arbor Day or join together to count salmon in the streams, the Redmond community benefits. Volunteers also stencil storm-drains, clear out unwanted brush, build trails and restore native areas.

Another form of volunteering for Redmond City government is to serve on a Board or Commission. This usually means attending meetings once or more a month to discuss and make recommendations on a wide variety of topics.

The Planning Commission monitors growth and development issues and evaluates and recommends revisions to land use policies and regulations. The Arts Commission sponsors and promotes arts programming and develops recommendations on art related issues. The Parks and Trails Commission makes recommendations regarding parks and trails acquisition and development and departmental programs, while the Redmond Youth Partnership Advisory Committee (RYPAC) is the voice for youth in Redmond – a group of youth and adults who help shape programs for the community.

This is but a few of the 10 groups who advise and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council. All Boards and Commissions are listed on the City's website – www.redmond.gov.

Or for a shorter term commitment, volunteers are always needed during one of Redmond's community events – Derby Days Summer Festival or RedmondLights. Hundreds of volunteers ensure these events go off without a hitch, though the time commitment can be as little as a few hours to an entire day to several months while serving on one of the event committees.

Larry Newby, a Redmond resident, has been volunteering to help the morning of the Derby Day parades for over five years. "It always gives me a lift to come out here early on a Saturday morning and help out," says Larry. "There's nothing like keeping up with a thousand kids, bikes and dogs to make me feel like I'm doing my part to help carry on a Redmond tradition."

It is clear that the City would not run as well or as smoothly without the almost 1000 volunteers per year who have the time and the passion to help create a community of good neighbors. But there is always room for more as some volunteers take a well-deserved break and the growing community puts more pressure on the City's existing programs and services. Whether residents can give a few hours a year or a few hours a day – the need exists in every department in every season. Find your passion, and dig in!

Volunteering in the Community

It's not just the City who could not function without volunteers. Every community and human service organization requires volunteers to have any hope of achieving their goals. Highlighted below are a few of these organizations. See page 26 for a list of many more.

Hopelink...make lasting change

Hopelink serves homeless and low income families, children, seniors and people with disabilities. Its mission is to promote self-sufficiency for all members of our community; helping people make lasting change. Hopelink offers an integrated array of programs that enable families in crisis to make progress toward and achieve self-sufficiency. These range from food and shelter to child and family development to adult education.

Last year, Hopelink received support from 1700 volunteers,

but even that was not enough to meet all the needs of the community. For more information on how to volunteer, visit www.hope-link.org.

Project Smart Turn... an opportunity to mentor

This successful community partnership has helped many at-risk young people by providing a wide range of prevention, intervention and crisis management services to both them and their families. The key is intervention before the at-risk behavior of skipping school, running away or exhibiting anger has a chance to escalate into criminal behavior.

Smart Turn has a number of opportunities for volunteers interested in playing a positive role in the lives of young people. Mentors are especially needed. For more information call 206-205-7006.

Your local Red Cross...

neighbors helping neighbors
If you have a passion for helping others and are bilingual, your local Red Cross needs you. They

are looking for volunteers to provide interpretation and translation support to the local limited- and non-English speaking community.

A success story – Mario worked as a successful physician for ten years in Cuba but could only work odd jobs in the US to make ends meet. After a year of classes, Mario speaks English, but still has a hard time with reading and writing. To resume his medical career in the US, Mario needed help with his naturalization interview and with the help of Redmond resident and Red Cross volunteer interpreter Claudia Cadena, he completed his naturalization process. He now has his green card and is on his way to becoming a physician's assistant.

For information about becoming a Red Cross volunteer interpreter or translator, 206-726-3566, volunteers@seattlredcross.org or www.seattlredcross.org.

Donating hours towards trail maintenance and planting in Nike Park

